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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION V  
POLLUTION REPORT

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**Date:** October 2, 2000

**Subject:** Stickney Alley Mercury Spill, Stickney, Cook County,  
Illinois

**From:** Charles Gebien, OSC

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**BACKGROUND**

**POLREP:** Initial, #1 and **FINAL** State Notification: IEPA notified  
**Report Period:** September 27-30, 2000 **Response Authority:** CERCLA  
**Start Date:** September 27, 2000 **Completion Date:** September 30, 2000  
**Site Account#:** B5R7 **U.S.EPA Emerg. RCRA Gen #:** ILP200001918  
**Action Memorandum Status:** pending **NPL Status:** non-NPL  
**IEPA Emerg Gen#:** 0313003002 **IEMA Incident #:** 20001841

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

On September 27, 2000 at 10:07 am the Stickney Fire Department (SFD) received a telephone report from [REDACTED] of 4216 S. Maple Street of a likely mercury spill in the alley behind his garage. The SFD responded and verified the presence of a pool of mercury on the concrete alley. SFD Chief Larry Meyer contacted the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC) and the Illinois EPA, and dispatched a hazmat team to secure the scene. After receiving a list of cleanup contractors from IEPA, Chief Meyer contacted Superior Environmental Services to perform a cleanup. Superior dispatched a cleanup crew from Marine Pollution Control (MPC) which arrived on-scene at 1:30 pm. MPC used a HEPA vac to collect approximately 15 pounds of the pooled mercury and particulate matter from the pavement. MPC visually surveyed the alley and observed mercury droplets scattered in the alley from the block of 4200 to 4300, and suspected that the mercury was tracked by vehicles. Don Klopke of the IEPA Emergency Response Desplaines Office arrived at about 4:00 pm and called the U.S. EPA Region 5 spill phone to request U.S. EPA assistance. On-scene Coordinator (OSC) Charles Gebien was dispatched to the incident and arrived at

about 5:00 pm. James Chodora, Pollution Control Officer of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District was also present at the scene. At the request of Chief Meyer and IEPA, OSC Gebien arranged for START and a U.S. EPA cleanup contractor Ferguson Harbors Inc. (FHI) to be dispatched to the scene to complete the cleanup operations. An emergency task order for \$25,000 was issued to FHI. IEPA dispatched a team from the Illinois Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) to monitor mercury vapors in nearby residences and provide information regarding mercury to the public. Leo Rosalles, U.S. EPA office of Public Affairs, the U.S. EPA Criminal Investigation Division (CID) and the FBI and were called to the scene.

#### **REMOVAL ACTIONS TAKEN**

On Wednesday 9/27/00, OSC Gebien and START member Jeff Hughes responded to the incident and confirmed the presence of mercury droplets in the alley with MPC and IEPA. MPC marked the droplet locations with chalk. Using a list assembled by SFD, the IDPH team visited residences to monitor mercury vapors using Jerome mercury vapor analyzers. FHI used flashlights and Jeromes to inspect the tires on cars parked near the alley. The City used a bobcat to remove concrete barriers between parking areas to allow for evacuation of cars without using the contaminated alley. About 50 cars were driven away from the area by their owners after the car interiors were checked with Jeromes for mercury. Overnight, the City assembled a follow up list of 18 homes to be checked for mercury. START, police, and the school principal visited the Homes Elementary School at 4400 S. Home Ave to check for mercury contamination. The Jerome was used and no mercury was detected. During the evening, four teenager boys crossed the caution tape and walked thru the alley. A Jerome was used to identify to presence of mercury on the soles of the shoes and the shoes were held for cleaning. The boys were taken home by the police. The police guarded the area throughout the night.

On Thursday 9/28/00, the local television and newspaper media was present throughout the day. FHI cleaned the previously marked hot areas within the parking areas and alley using HEPA vacs and HgX solution. Mercury vapor concentrations ranged from .007 to .035 mg/cubic meter prior to cleaning. Thirty five gallons of Behr's N0980 concrete sealer was applied to the cleaned areas of the alley. IDPH continued to monitor residences for mercury contamination. CID, IEPA and the OSC searched the dumpsters and garbage containers in the alley for evidence. The garbage in two containers was slightly contaminated and was removed for disposal as mercury contaminated debris. The south 1/3rd of the alley was cleared of mercury contamination and was reopened. The remaining areas were patrolled overnight.

On Friday 9/29/00, FHI and START walked the site using Jeromes. No mercury droplets were observed and no mercury vapors were detected. The cleaned shoes were returned to the teenagers

parents. One 55-gal drum of high level mercury, five 55-gal drums of low level mercury debris, one fibre drum of low level debris, and two 5-gal buckets of decon water were transported by FHI to Heritage Environmental, Lemont, Illinois.

On Saturday 9/30/00, OSC Stavros Emmanouil and START visited a residence at 4129 S. Maple to retest the home for mercury vapors, after IDPH found inconsistent readings with the Jerome on Thursday and Friday. START used a LUMEX to retest the home. The highest concentrations found in the home were 30 nanograms, well under the 300 nanogram level of concern. The data was faxed to IDPH.

#### PLANNED REMOVAL ACTIONS

●None

#### KEY ISSUES

OSC Gebien will prepare an action memo.

#### ESTIMATED COSTS

|      | Cost      | Ceiling  |
|------|-----------|----------|
| ERRS | \$20,000* | \$25,000 |

Based on rough cost estimate, without benefit of RCMS cost data.